

DELTA-MENDOTA CANAL UNIT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LONG-TERM CONTRACT RENEWAL

Summary of PEIS

October 2000

Chapter 3

SUMMARY OF PEIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results of the recently completed NEPA documents that address providing CVP water to the 20 contractors located within the Delta-Mendota Canal Unit. These documents include the PEIS for the CVPIA and the associated Biological Opinion. It should be recognized that under each of the descriptions presented in this chapter, references to "No-Action Alternative" and other alternatives are specific to the referenced documents, and not to the alternatives described in the remaining chapters of this EA.

PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

On October 30, 1992, the President signed into law the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 (PL 102-575) that included Title XXXIV, the CVPIA. The CVPIA amended the previous authorizations of the CVP to give fish and wildlife protection, restoration, and mitigation equal priority with irrigation and domestic uses and to give fish and wildlife enhancement a project purpose equal to power generation. Through the CVPIA, Interior is developing policies and programs to improve environmental conditions that were affected by operations, management, and physical facilities of the CVP. The CVPIA also includes tools to facilitate larger efforts in California to improve environmental conditions in the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay-Delta system. The PEIS addressed potential impacts and benefits implementing provisions of the CVPIA. The PEIS was prepared by Reclamation and the Service.

The analysis in the PEIS was intended to disclose the probable region-wide effects of implementing the CVPIA and provide a basis for making a decision among the alternatives. The PEIS was developed to allow subsequent environmental documents to incorporate the PEIS analysis by reference and limit the need to re-evaluate the region-wide and cumulative impacts of the CVPIA. In some cases, worst-case assumptions were used to maximize the utility of the analysis for tiering within the scope of the impacts analyzed in the PEIS.

As the project-specific actions are considered, the lead agencies must determine if the specific impacts were adequately analyzed in the PEIS. If the actions under consideration

had been previously evaluated and the impacts of such actions would not be greater than those analyzed in the PEIS or would not require additional mitigation measures, the actions could be considered part of the overall program approved in the PEIS Record of Decision. In such a case, an administrative decision could be made that no further environmental documentation could be necessary. If a tiered document is appropriate, the tiered document may be an EIS or an EA. The tiered documents can use the PEIS by reference to avoid duplication and focus more narrowly on the new alternatives or more detailed site-specific effects. Therefore, only changes from the alternatives considered in the PEIS would be addressed in detail in the tiered documents.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL ANALYSES OF PEIS ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives considered in the PEIS were analyzed to determine the potential for adverse and beneficial impacts associated with implementation of all actions as compared to continuation of the PEIS No-Action Alternative conditions. The most significant changes under the alternatives as compared to the PEIS No-Action Alternative were related to surface water and groundwater facilities operations and deliveries, power generation, fishery resources, agricultural land use and economics, and waterfowl habitat.

Due to the integrated nature of the PEIS alternatives, it is not possible to determine if the impacts and benefits would occur due to a specific CVPIA provision or goal. The impacts and benefits of a PEIS alternative are due to the overall implementation of CVPIA as compared to conditions without implementation of CVPIA in the No-Action Alternative.

LOCALIZED IMPACTS OF CVPIA IMPLEMENTATION ON WATER SERVICE CONTRACTORS

The primary impact to CVP water service contractors, as described in the PEIS, is not due to contract provisions, but rather to the implementation of the CVPIA. The reallocation of CVP water to fish and wildlife purposes under the CVPIA reduced average annual CVP water deliveries to water service contractors from 2,270,000 acre-feet per year under the PEIS No-Action Alternative to 1,933,000 acre-feet per year under all of the PEIS alternatives, including the Preferred Alternative. The reduction occurred differently for Delta-Mendota Canal Unit users, as summarized below.

- C Average annual CVP water deliveries for agricultural water service contractors located in the Delta-Mendota Canal Unit decreased 18 percent from pre-CVPIA Affected Environment conditions.
- C Average annual CVP water deliveries for municipal water service contractors located in the Delta-Mendota Canal Unit decreased 6 percent from pre-CVPIA Affected Environment conditions.

There was no change in deliveries to water rights holders, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, or Delta-Mendota Exchange Contractors under CVPIA implementation.

IMPACTS AND BENEFITS TO LONG-TERM WATER SERVICE CONTRACT RENEWALS IN THE PEIS

The PEIS No-Action Alternative did assume renewal of existing contracts for total contract amounts, as previously described, for a 40-year period based upon contract provisions of 1994 interim contract renewal provisions. The PEIS alternatives assumed renewal of contracts for the same amounts as included in the PEIS No-Action Alternative; therefore, there would be no impacts or benefits under the PEIS alternatives for renewing CVP contracts at the same contract amounts. The PEIS alternatives assumed a 25-year contract period, which coincided with the PEIS study period; therefore, it was not possible to evaluate impacts associated with a change in contract periods.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LONG-TERM WATER SERVICE CONTRACT RENEWALS

The PEIS was intended to provide the basis for a decision on whether to implement most of the CVPIA provisions. However, the decision-maker may determine that additional analysis is needed to reach a decision on how to implement any of the provisions.

A Record of Decision based on the PEIS would include a decision to renew water service contracts in accordance with the requirements of the CVPIA. The Record of Decision based on the PEIS would likely not include a decision about how to implement tiered pricing. Rather, that decision may be deferred to this EA to allow further analysis of alternatives and incorporation of the evaluation into the contract negotiation process, if possible.

The PEIS assumed that subsequent NEPA documentation for long-term contract renewals would include a summary of a needs analysis and biological assessment at a contractor-specific level.